Mawlānā's Open Door in Johore and Singapore

الرِحَابُ المَبْرُورَةُ في جهُورُ وسِنغافُورَة

ربيع الأول ١٤٢٤ الموافق لأيار مايو ٢٠٠٣

Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1424 May 2003

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﴿ وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْمَشْرِقُ وَٱلْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا۟ فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ ٱللَّهِ ۚ
إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ ﴾ البقرة

Unto Allāh belong the East and the West,

and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allāh's countenance.

Lo! Allāh is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (2:115).



Glory and thanks to You, our Lord, for Your mercy and favors which cannot be encompassed. Greatest of those is our having our Prophet Muḥammad, the Paragon of creation and its beauty and perfection, as our guiding light in this stormy world. Our greatest thanks to You, therefore, for lighting our way to his inheritors, our teachers. Upon him, his Family and Companions, and upon them and us Your blessings and peace forever, to the dear Day You take us back to You!

This is the brief testimonial of one of those Divine favors lavished on an undeserving servant standing at the door of the mercies of His Lord. This record of a seven-day journey from Damascus the Protected to Singapore and Johore, Malaysia, in the last week of the blessed Mawlid month of Rabī' al-Awwal of 1424 (last week of May 2003) was intended, first, to fix in writing the meanings of those mercies as a personal provision of thanks and praise in times of drought; second, as a glimpse of the lights of the people of mercy that one finds wherever one turns, East and West, even in the darkness that seemingly covers us. ﴾**And whithersoever you turn, there is the countenance of Allāh**﴿ *(2:115)!*

﴿ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا۟ فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ ٱللَّهِ ۚ ﴾

The first thing that the apple of our eyes, Mawlānā al-Shaykh Nāẓim said when I asked him permission to travel and he gave it, was to "Visit the Maqām of Nūḥ." The thirteenth issue of Inabah magazine – published by the historical Khadijah Mosque of Singapore – states (p. 109-110):

> *Not much is known about the early life of this famous 19th century saint except that he came from the Northern Malaysian state of Kedah and lived for a while in Penang, an island off the coast of Kedah. He was a direct descendant of our Holy Prophet Muḥammad – ṣall-Allāhu 'alayhi wa-Ālihi wa-Sallam, an Arab from Ḥaḍramaut, the area of southern Arabia that is now known as Yemen. He made his appearance in Singapore after the island became a British colony in 1819. He came into prominence because, being a majdhūb, he did things that are out of the ordinary. He loved children who liked to accompany him everywhere he went. He would enter a shop, take out all the money from the cash drawer and throw it to the waiting children. Those shopkeepers who were aware of his holy state did not make any attempt to stop him and were rewarded by Allah with prosperity in their business thereafter. Such activities, however, were frowned upon by the British colonial masters who tried to put him in jail a number of times. However, after doing this many times, they finally gave up and left him alone. The reason? Each time he was arrested and put in jail, he mysteriously disappeared from his cell and was seen outside walking free. This is one of the signs of awliya, their service to God has set them free from man…. Stories on Ḥabīb Noh often revolve around his miracles – especially his incredible ability to appear in a number of places at the same time…. [He] was also known for his gift of knowing about events to come and his state of unveiling (kashf)…. Habib Noh died peacefully on Friday 14 Rabi'ul Awal 1283 (1866 CE) and was buried on the hill at his own prior request.*

Upon arrival, we dutifully headed to the Maqām of al-Ḥabīb Nūḥ al-Ḥabshī. We climbed the high steps and entered to greet him then greeted his brother 'Abd al-Raḥmān at his Maqām outside. SALĀMUN 'ALAYKUM our Masters, our Honorable Guides, our Living Wellsprings bringing us quenching waters from the heavenly world, O Shining Lights for heavy, untrained eyes, showering tender mercies on hard hearts! Can you not open up our understandings, inspire us with healing gratitude, remodel us into obedient servants of our Lord?

* * *

The Awliyā' are famed for munificence and generosity because they are the Friends of the All-Giving. Their giving never stops because His giving never stops. They open the gates of permission in every quarter to every humble visitor that stands at the gate. After permission comes ease; and ease is the mark of permission, as we saw from the beginning to the end of this blessed trip. In Damascus also, it had long become evident that the blessed day in the life of a student was the day he or she had obtained the baraka and madad of a pious person, a holy place, a blessed event, far above completing a book or receiving the certification of a teacher and prestigious chains of transmission.

With this visit to the living, the first day and those that followed brought many meetings with the people of mercy. More refreshing

than air to the surfacing diver or water to a desert traveller are the blessed sights that bring light. These wirds – recurrent sources – are the preys and prizes of every wise mu'min in the dunyā and the incomprehensible folly that eludes those dunyā has veiled. ﴿**If they had only remained on the right path We would certainly have given them to drink of water in abundance**﴾ (72:16)!

﴿وَأَلَّوِ ٱسْتَقَٰمُواْ عَلَى ٱلطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَٰهُم مَّآءً غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾﴾ الجن

When I saw the worldly beauty of Singapore, that pearl of the Orient, that meeting of the sophistications of East and West, which heightens its lure by reining in, through remnants of old-world frugality, the gaudy permissiveness that ruined the face of the West, only to better compete for the wealth of this world, its streets an orderly, proud, young urban architecture of cellphone-absorbed, fashion-refined, self-policed, polyglot-jaded male and female cadres of dunyā dressed and bared in the latest fashions…

…I remembered the sight of decorum, true power and wealth, a few months back, of the Yemeni grandson of the Prophet, upon him and his House blessings and peace, al-Ḥabīb 'Alī al-Jafrī, as he walked into a packed auditorium at Dār al-Fatwā in Beirut, white jubba and turban over white robe, his gait vigorous but not rushed, his eyes fixed on the same invisible love as his heart, impervious and serene to seeing or being seen as if he were completely

alone, yet smiling and present to those around him with the highest courtesy, and the words that followed: "Let not the would-be summoner to Allāh and His Prophet turn to everything he sees or hears lest his water become colored; then he will become affected by everything and everyone, but affect nothing and no-one!"

May Allāh reward you, yā Ḥabīb, what precious advice you gave to every wary student! Indeed, Islām in Singapore, vibrant with futuwwa and taṣawwuf, is no more nor less oriented by the wisdoms of the Sufi Masters of Ḥaḍramawt than its soul-brothers in the rest of South-East Asia. To those Ḥabā'ib saints goes the palm of bringing the seal of the Divine dispensations to the shores of Indonesia and the rest of Borneo and Java. No wonder does the visitor to Singapore's Arab Street find, even in a humble perfume shop, a Scholar from the Prophetic tree. May the heirs not sqander the hard-earned gains reaped by the forerunners!

* * *

No monastic ivory tower for you, then, O Muslim traveller in this world, and even less heed paid to the endless chatter of the media. Rather, focus and discipline in remembering your Return, and to Whom! as our Naqshbandi Liege-Lords said – "seclusion in the crowd" (khalwah fil-jalwah).

The Seal of Prophets and Paragon of perfection, our Master Muḥammad, upon him and his House blessings and peace, said:

عَنْ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ
قَالَ مَنْ دَخَلَ السُّوقَ فَقَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ
وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ حَيٌّ لَا يَمُوتُ بِيَدِهِ الْخَيْرُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ كَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ أَلْفَ أَلْفِ حَسَنَةٍ وَمَحَا عَنْهُ أَلْفَ أَلْفِ سَيِّئَةٍ
وَرَفَعَ لَهُ أَلْفَ أَلْفِ دَرَجَةٍ رواه الترمذي وابن ماجه والدارمي وأحمد

"Whoever enters the market then says **'There is no divinity but Allāh, alone, without partner! His alone is the Kingdom, and to Him alone is due all praise! He causes death and brings to life, in His power is all goodness, and He is able over all things!'** *Allāh will write one million good deeds for him, erase one million sins, and raise him one million levels!"*

* * *

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Khānī in the introduction to his epitome of Ṭarīqa ethics titled al-Bahjat al-Saniyya ("The Superb

Splendor") quoted Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī al-Ḥanafī's explanation of this magnificent ḥadīth – Allāh have mercy on both of them:

قال الشيخ محمد بن عبدالله الخاني الخالدي المجددي النقشبندي في كتاب
البهجة السَّنِيَّة في آداب الطريقة العلية النقشبندية قال العلامة الشيخ علي
القاري الحنفي في شرح حديث من دخل السوق فقال لا إله إلا الله ولعل وجه
هذه الفضيلة لخصوص السوق أنها محل الغفلة فالذاكر فيهم كالمجاهد في الغازين
وهذا دليل لما اختاره السادة النقشبندية من أكابر الصوفية حيث قالوا الخلوة
في الجلوة والعزلة في الخلطة فالصوفي كائن بائن وغريب قريب وعرشي فرشي
ونحو ذلك من عباراتهم نفعنا الله ببركاتهم

"Perhaps this merit is specific to the market because it is the scene of heedlessness. The one that remembers Allāh among them is similar to the Mujāhid in an army of conquerors. This forms evidence for what the Naqshbandī Masters – great Sufis – have preferred when they said, 'isolation [with Allāh]' (khalwah) is during 'exposure [to people]' (jalwah), and solitude is in mingling. Thus the Sufi 'exists but is remote, a stranger but near, relating both to the Throne and to the ground' among similar expressions of theirs – Allāh nurture us with their blessings!"

I bear witness that among those barakāt is the fact that every outward and inward baraka is through the blessing of our Shaykh, Mawlānā al-Shaykh Nāẓim, himself through the blessing of our Prophet, upon him, his House – including our Shaykh – and his Companions blessings and peace, just as the Mujaddid, Shaykh al-Islām al-Subkī said in his Fatāwā (I have replaced two mentions of the Prophet ﷺ with that of Mawlānā for context):

قال شيخ الإسلام المجدد الحافظ الإمام التقي السبكي في فتاويه
الحمدلله الذي أسعدنا بنبيّه صلى الله عليه وسلم سعادة لا تبيد
وأشهد أن لا إله الا الله وحده لا شريك له الولي الحميد
وأشهد أن محمدًا عبده ورسوله الهادي الى كل أمر رشيد
صلى الله عليه وعلى آله صلاة تليق بجلاله لا تزال تعلو وتزيد
وسلم تسليمًا كثيرًا الى يوم المزيد
وبعد فإن الله يعلم أن كل خير أنا فيه ومنّ عليّ به
فهو بسبب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم والتجآئي اليه
واعتمادي في توسلي الى الله في كل أموري عليه
فهو وسيلتي الى الله في الدنيا والآخرة
وكم له عليّ من نعم باطنة وظاهرة

Al-Subkī's Prayer of Tawassul

To Allāh belongs all praise, Who has blessed us,
in the person of Mawlānā, with an endless felicity.
I bear witness that there is no deity except Allāh alone
without partner, the protecting Friend, the Glorious.
I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and messenger,
the guide to every upright matter.
May Allāh send blessings and peace upon him in a manner befitting
His majesty, with a blessing rising ever higher and increasing,
And a superabundant greeting of peace until the Day of the Increase!
To begin: Verily Allāh knows that every goodness in my life which
He has bestowed upon me is on account of Mawlānā
and that my recourse is to him, and my reliance upon him
in seeking a means to Allāh in every matter of mine.
Verily he is my means to Allāh in this world and the next.
And the gifts of Allāh I owe to him are too many to count,
both the hidden and the visible!

Among those gifts is the following meeting. This bankrupt-souled, weak slave sat outside a conference room in Singapore, confessing with a weeping heart to his helplessness in any such da'wah as that for which his unsuspecting hosts supposed him qualified. Staring at the floor I told my Lord of my longing to see one of His elect servants so that I may cheat nafs with madad and turn schooling into inspiration. Lo and behold, as I looked up, there was, standing over me in the garb of Egyptian Shaykhs, head inclined with a slight smile and child-like eyes, a man introduced as Shaykh 'Abd al-Maqṣūd. "As-Salāmu 'alaykum – Wa-'alaykum as-Salām, Marḥaban!" When I heard "Marḥaban" I jumped some more: "Are you, Yā Sīdī, from Morocco?" He replied that he was an Idrīsī who had lived in Egypt. Also known as 'Abd al-Muṣawwir, Shaykh 'Abd al-Maqṣūd – Allāh bless and save him! – represents Azhar University in Singapore. That day he had come to read some instructional poems which I volunteered to translate on the spot, a work for which I am thankful and some of which follows:

From Dīwān Sīdī ʻAbd al-Muṣawwir

I.e. Shaykh ʻAbd al-Maqṣūd Fāris al-Idrīsī al-Miṣrī al-Singāpūrī

من ديوان سيدي عبد المصوّر حفظه الله تعالى ونفعنا به

يعني الشيخ عبد المقصود فارس الإدريسي المصري ثم السنغافوري

ليس سؤلي من الجِنان نعيما * غير أني أحبّها لأراكا

يا حياة النفوس أنت دوائي * فاعفُ عني وداوني بدواكا

ما لي يا رب غيرُ بابك بابٌ * فافتح الباب كي أنال رضاكا

يا إلهي وسيّدي ومليكـي * لست أرجو من الوجود سواكا

فاشرح الصدر يا إلهي وجُدْ لي * منك بالفضل أنت تملك ذاكا

إنني في الورى ضعيفٌ مُعَنًّى * قوِّ جسمي ونجّني من بلاكا

يا إلهي أنا الضعيف بفقري * ما لي إلا رضاك فامنح هداكا

واشف قلبي وداوني يا إلهي * أنت ربي وأنت أهلٌ لذاكا

احفظ الأهل والبنين جميعا * واشف ولدي وداوهم بدواكا

وانصر الدين يا إلهي وقوِّ * أمّة الحق واهزِمَنَّ عِداكا

واستجب ربّنا لما قد دعونا * لست أرجو من العباد سواكا

1. Laysa Su'lī min al-Jināni Na'īma (Supplication)

My longing for Paradise is not for its pleasures
but I love them because then I will see You.

O life of all souls You are my healing
So heal me and treat me with Your cure!

I do not have, my Lord, a door other than Your door.
Then open the door that I may receive Your good pleasure.

My God, my Master, my Owner!
I do not hope from this existence other than You.

Therefore, expand my breast, my God, be bountiful to me
With Your special munificence: You can well do so!

I am, of all creatures, weak and oppressed;
Strengthen my body and save me from Your trials.

My God! I am the poor dependent in my true poverty;
I have nothing except Your acceptance, so open up Your guidance

And heal my heart, and cure me, O my God!
You are my Lord and You are fit to do so!

Save my spouse and my children,
Cure my son, and heal them with Your medicine!

Grant victory to the Religion, my God, and strengthen
The Community of Truth and Right, destroy Your enemies!

Answer us, our Lord, in what we have just begged.
I hope nothing from Your slaves – only You.

ومن ديوان سيدي عبد المصوّر أيضا

لي سادة من عزهم * أقدامهم فوق الجباه
إن لم أكن أنا منهم * لي فيهم عز وجاه
سجدوا لمولاهم وما * سجدوا لمخلوق سواه
هم علموا الدنيا الهوا * وهواهم فيه رضاه
هل تدري من هم يا فتى * السادة الأمرا الأباه
هم آل بيت المصطفى * أهل الصفا أهل العباه
الله طهّرهم من الأ * نجاس في هذي الحياه
ودعا العباد لودهم * ووِدادهم فيه هُداه
من جاء يطلب ودهم * يحظى بتكريم الإله
فاسلك طريقهم تنل * من ربنا عزاً وجاه
وقف على أعتابهم * واسأل تنل حقا رضاه
عز التقى عز الغنى * عن كل مخلوق سواه
وطريقهم فيه الهدى * ولباسهم فيه تقاه
قاموا الليالي ركعا * لم يطلبوا إلا هداه
سجدت جوارحهم له * ولأجله سجدت جباه
يبكون من خوف على * ما مر في دنيا الحياه
وفي النهار تراهُمُ * الفرسان في كل اتجاه
يرفعن رايات الرضا * شكرا لربي في علاه
يا رب ألحقنا بهم * واستر بفضلك ما تراه
واغفر لنا ما قد مضى * يا ربنا إنا عُصاه
وتُب علينا توبة * تمحو عن المعاصي خطاه
واجبر بفضلك كسرنا * واسلك بنا سبل النجاه
وصلِّ ربي على النبي * والآل ما سجدت جباه

2. Lī Sādatun min 'Izzihim (The Awliyā')

I have masters whose glorious rank stand them on every front.
If I am not of them yet in them I possess glory and fame.
They prostrate to their Lord and to no creature ever – only Him.
None but they taught this world love. Their love has His good pleasure.
Do you know them, dear student? They are the high leaders, the lords.
They are the Family of the Chosen One, the Pure, those of the Mantle.
Allāh has purified them of the stains of this life,
Calling His servants to love them – and this love holds His guidance.
Whoever comes seeking their love is blessed with The God's gifts.
Therefore, tread their path and reap from our Lord glory and fame.
Stand on their doorsteps, ask! Then truly receive His good pleasure,
The honor of Godwariness, of sufficiency from all creatures – only Him.
In their path is guidance, in their garb Godwariness.
They watched the nights, bowing, asking for naught save His guidance.
Their limbs prostrate to Him, for Him prostrate their fronts.
They cast themselves down, fearing for lives spent in the world.
By day you see them, knights riding to every field,
Hoisting the flags of His good-pleasure, thanking my Lord on high.
Our Lord! Join us with them! Please, bide what You see in us.
Forgive us what we've done, our Lord, truly we are sinners!
Relent toward us, a relentence uprooting us from sins.
Mend with Your favor our ruin, take us on the paths of salvation.
Bless, Lord, the Prophet and his House as long as fronts prostrate.

ومن ديوان سيدي عبد المصوّر أيضا

يا صفوةَ الخلق أنتم سادةُ الأمم
الله طهّركم الله شرّفكم من سالفِ القِدَمِ

أنتم أمانُ الورى من كل مَهلكة
وأنتمُ النورُ للأعراب والعجم

أرشدتمونا إلى الرحمن خالقِنا
وكنتم للورى نورٌ على علمِ

يا آلَ طه لكم في القلب منزلةٌ
ففرّجوا كربَنا يا خِيرةَ الأُمَمِ

صلّى عليكم إلهُ العرش
ما طَلَعت شمسُ النهار وزالت غَيهَبُ الظُّلَمِ

المصطفى جدُّكم أوصى بحُبِّكم
لم يسألِ الأجرَ إلا الودَّ والكَرَمِ

فودُّ أهلِ النبي عِزٌّ ومرحمةٌ
والخيرُ في وُدِّ أهلِ الحِلِّ والحَرَمِ

يا ربِّ بالمصطفى أكرِم أحِبّتَنا
واغفر لنا ما مضى من سالفِ القِدَمِ

وصلِّ على المصطفى والآلِ أجمعِهِم
ومَن بهَدْيِ النبيِّ والآلِ مُلتَزِمِ

3. Yā Ṣafwat al-Khalq (Ahl al-Bayt Ulema)

O chosen people, you are the masters of human beings.
Allāh has purified you, He has ennobled you since before the beginning.

You are the safety of creation against every peril
And you are a light for Arabs and non-Arabs.

You have pointed us to the all-Merciful, our Creator,
And you are, for creation, a light shining on high.

O people of Ṭa Ha! In the hearts you hold a most special place.
Therefore, deflect our hardship, O most elect of nations!

May the Lord of the Throne send His blessings upon you
As long as the sun rises and darkness is removed.

The Elect One is your grandfather; he instructed us to love you
– He never asked for any reward except love and generosity.

Therefore, love of the Prophet's Family is honor and great mercy.
True goodness lies in love of the knowers of the licit and the prohibited.

Our Lord! Through al-Muṣṭafā bless and honor our beloved ones
And forgive us what has befallen since before the beginning.

Bless al-Muṣṭafā and his Family – all of them,
And all that keep to the guidance of the Prophet and his Āl.

ومن ديوان سيدي عبد المصوّر أيضا

أطلت بملأ الدنيا بهاها * وهيّمت البرية في هواها

وعم الكونَ إشراقٌ وحب * يعانق في الربيع ضِيا سَناها

وللأزها ر حين تميل نجوى * ويفهمها الذي حقا بَراها

وعِطرُ الزَّهر في الأكوان يسري * تفوح به الحياة على مداها

وكل الكون في فرح وبشر * تشاركه الملائك في سماها

وعرش الله في الملكوت يزهوا * بمولود علا قَدرا وَجاها

محمد سيدي أهلا وسهلا * بميلاد الهدى والنور طه

تبارك من له أعلى مقاما * ومرتبة وعزا لا يُضاها

فمن يكن النبي له إماما * سيسكن في الجنان علا رَباها

وفي الفردوس مسكنه وربي * جنان مثمرات في عُلاها

وقبل ميلاده ظهرت أمور * علامات تحذر من رآها

فنار الفرس قد خمدت بليل * وكانت قبل مسعور لظاها

وساوَة قد أغيض الماء فيها * وأضحت بَلقعا ماذا دهاها

وشع النور في كل الضواحي * بنور المصطفى لما أتاها

وهبت أمّة الصحراء تبني * بناء المجد وارتفعت رُبَاها

كتاب الله كان لهم إماما * وسنّة أحمد سلكوا خطاها

وحب محمد والآل فيهم * سلوكا واعتقادا واتجاها

فآل المصطفى في الأرض أمن * وهم في الأرض أعلام تراها

فهاهم هاهنا نور وهدى * لهم شرف وعز لا يضاها

فلُذْ بجنابهم تحظى بقرب * وتسكن جنة طابت جناها

فهم يدعون للرحمن ربي * سلوكا واتباعا واتجاها

فهم بالليل رهبانا تراهم * وفرسان إذا ما الصبح قاها

سلاما مولد الهادي فإنا * بدنيا قد غشاها ما غشاها

فهذى القدس تبكي كل يوم * واضحى عِراقُنا ضيراً نراها

جموع الكفر جاءت واستَعدت * فقوموا وانهضوا أبناء طه

وفي الصومال مات الناس جوعا * وقال الناس ما قد دهاها

وفي الشيشان تقتيل وهدم * وفي كشمير ذا فتن نراها

ألا يا رب أدركنا بلطف * بحق الآل من أبناء طه

وبالمختار فاغفر كل ذنب * وكن للمسلمين حما وجاها

وبارك كل من حضر والبنا * وحقق للنفوس إذاً مُناها

وصلى الله ربي كل وقت * على المختار ما شمس نراها

وآل والصحاب ذوي المعالي * حماة الدين ما صُبحٌ جلاها

4. AṬALLAT BI-MALA'I AL-DUNYĀ BAHĀHĀ (THE MAWLID)

The beauty of the world has dawned and creation exults in love.

New light bathes the universe, spring love embraces its bright boughs.

Flowers sway, converse in confidence, a tongue known to their Creator.

Their fragrant scent suffuses the universes, all life fragrant with it.

All creation is in joy and elation including the angels in high heaven.

The Throne of the Merciful beams for a newborn of unmatched honor

– Muḥammad my liege-lord Ṭa Ha! Welcome, guidance and light!

Blessed is he who has the highest station, rank and glory unsurpassed!

Whoever has the Prophet for leader will dwell in high-ground Paradise

And in Firdaws is his house, by my Lord, high fruit-bearing gardens!

Before his birth appeared signs warning the witnesses.

The Persians' fire went out one night after having blazed a millenium.

Sāwa's lake dried up and turned into a desert in the morning.

Light in every corner lit up with the light of the Elect reaching it.

The nation of the desert rose, built the edifice of glory, raised its flags.

The Book of Allāh was their leader and they trod Aḥmad's Sunna,

Love of Muḥammad and his House in them their very life-blood.

For the love of the Āl on the earth is safety, they are its sign-posts.

Here they are, light, guidance, bearing honor and glory unsurpassed!

Seek refuge in them, get near, and dwell in sweet-boughed Paradise!

They summon to my most Merciful Lord, that is their very life-blood.

At night you see them monks, and knights when daylight follows.

Greetings, birth of our guide! For we reel in a world overwhelmed.

There is Jerusalem weeping day after day; there, our Iraq faces evil.

The hosts of unbelief have come and schemed. Rise, sons of Ṭa Ha!

In Somalia they died of hunger and people scarcely believed their eyes.

In Chechnya, slaughters and destruction; woe and strife in Kashmere.

Our Lord! Rescue us with kindness for the sake of Ṭa Ha's House!

By the Elect one forgive our sins and be the honor-fortress of Muslims.

Bless those present and their dependents. Give souls their hopes.

Bless, Allāh, our Lord, every instant, the Elect one as long as we live

With the most noble Āl and Companions, the guardians of Religion.

ومن ديوان سيدي عبد المصوّر أيضا

علم التصوف نور ليس يدركه   من يعرف الكتب أو من يمسك القلما

إن التصوف نور الحق يقذفه   في قلب عبد بكى من خوفه ألما

يحاسب النفي في الأوقات أجمعها   يرجو النجاة ويرجو أن يرى كرما

لا تطلبوه بكتب في الورى كتبت   بل اطلبوه بشيخ في الورى عُلِما

اللـه بغيتـه اللـه طلبتـه   في الليل تنظره قد ورم القدما

يا قوم جدوا وسيروا خلف سادتنا حقا وكونوا لهم يا إخوتي خدما

لا يخدعنك مغرور بمنطقه   . . . .

إن التصوف رب العرش أنزله   على النبي بذاكم أخبر العلما

فمن أراد الهدى فليأت ساحته   فأحسنوا ظنكم وابكوا إذاً ندما

The Sufi science is a light unreachable
By book-knowers or pen-holders.
Truly, Taṣawwuf is the light of al-Ḥaqq which He does cast
Into the heart of a slave weeping in painful fear,
Taking account of himself at all times,
Hoping for salvation and hoping for munificence.
Do not pursue it with books written among the people
But ask for it with a Master famed among them.
Allāh is his desire, Allāh his fervent request.
At night you see his ankles have swollen.
My people! Work hard and march behind our lords
In truth, and be – my brethren – their devoted servants.
Let not one deluded seduce you with his sophistry.

....

Truly, the Lord of the Throne has descended Taṣawwuf
Upon the Prophet, thus have the Ulema defined it.
Therefore, whoever wants guidance, let him approach its court
And keep the highest opinion, and do weep with remorse.

Our hosts then took us to visit the living Baraka of Borneo and the reason, no doubt, of mercy and light in their parts, the Beloved Bā 'Alawī Ḥabīb, the octogenarian Friend of Allāh in Johore, Malaysia, al-Ḥabīb 'Alī ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abd Allāh al-'Aydarūs. He received us standing in his house, wearing clothes that, according to Shaykh Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭās the Imām of the Bā 'Alawī mosque in Singapore, had not changed since the 1940s. Indeed the house

seemed completely bare and the Ḥabīb apologized saying that since the death of his last female relative "the house has turned into a mosque." This was the first of a series of teachings on his part which lifted us on the wings of humility. The Ḥabīb looked and spoke to each of us with kindness and cheer. His gaze seemed the reflection of a blue sky in a clear sea breezed with quick mirth and uninsistent appraisal for the ḥāl and mind of each interlocutor. He exemplified the allegory of the Prophet, upon him and his House blessings and peace, that speaks of "the shy virgin in her chamber" except for his joy at receiving us. He said the entire world poured into his house to visit him and he was glad to hear their news and turn their sights into drinking-stations from their spiritual well-springs. Shaykh Abū Bakr ibn Muḥsin al-ʿAṭṭās once indicated that this perpetual istimdād from the Umma is a BāʿAlawī trait. Mawlānā encapsulates it in his saying that our reply that "This is from your lights" to dazzled questioners about the Naqshbandiyya is literal. Hence Mawlānā turned us, also, into bees in search of blessings and into censors replying to those that bemoan the dearth of Awliyā on top of God's earth: Rise, blind sloth, and quit clinging to the dust with avarice and defeat!

"How fortunate we are, Hosts of Islām! For we have
of Divine care a pillar indestructible."

بُشْرَى لَنَا مَعْشَرَ الإِسْلامِ إِنَّ لَنَا
مِنَ العِنَايَةِ رُكْناً غَيْرَ مُنْهَدِمِ

But for his thin frame the Ḥabīb looked like Mawlānā in all things and even seemed to mimick him when he said to pardon his broken Arabic. To our begging his duʿā for our injured lands and people he replied, "The Umma is protected and in good hands and you have in Shaykh Nāẓim al-Kifāya." He gave us spiritual and material food and drink and invited us back for another feast. We prayed, supplicated, and Our Lord took us back to Singapore in the same way He had brought us, vibrant with dhikr and shukr.

رشحات عين حياتنا وصلت إلى روض المُنى
فتبارك الله الذي أعطى الورى بركاتها
لما رأيت تمامها فشرعت في تاريخها
ما كنت عطشانا له قد فاض من رشحاتها

The dew-beads of our life's source reached the grove of desires.
Blessed then be Allāh Who gave all beings their blessings!
After I saw their completion then began their chronicle,
Whatever I thirsted for has poured out from their dew.

(Al-Ṣafī, Dew-Beads from the Source of Life:
from his association with Khwājā ʿUbayd Allāh al-Aḥrār)

By the Divine favor this was the first living ʿAydarūs the writer was graced to meet in person. The other two are Shaykh Wajīh al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muṣṭafā (d. 1192) the author of al-Nafḥat al-ʿAydarūsiyya fil-Ṭarīqat al-Naqshbandiyya ("The

'Aydarūs Breath Concerning the Naqshbandī Sūfī Path"),[1] *and Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Shaykh ibn 'Abd Allāh the author of Ta'rīf al-Aḥyā' bi-Faḍā'il al-Iḥyā' ("Acquainting the Living with the Merits of 'The Reviving'") which begins:*

قال الحبيب الشريف الشيخ محيي الدين عبد القادر بن شيخ بن عبدالله العيدروس في طليعة كتابه تعريف الأحياء بفضائل الإحياء الحمد لله الذي وفق لنشر المحاسنِ وطيّها في كتاب عبدٍ جعل ذلك قرة لأعين الأحباب وذخيرة ليوم المآب، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد الذي أحيا بإحياء شريعته وطريقته قلوب ذوي الألباب وعلى آله الطيبين الطاهرين وجميع الأصحاب ما أشرقت شمس الإحياء للقلوب وتوجهت همة روحانية مصنفه الولي الموهوب إلى إسعاف ملازمي مطالعته ومحبّيه بالمطلوب...

Glory, praise, and thanks to Allāh Who has granted the proclamation of all kinds of goodness and enfolded them in the book of a servant which he made the apple of the eyes of His beloved ones and a provision for the Day of the Return! Blessings and greetings upon our liege-lord Muḥammad Who has revived, through the reviving of his Law and his Path, the hearts of those with understanding, and upon his excellent, pure Family and all his Companions, for as long as the sun of the Iḥyā' ['Ulūm al-Dīn] rises over the hearts and the high energy of its Divinely-gifted author's spirit turns to rescue in their quest those who are constant in reading it and its lovers...

[1] *Its manuscript is in the ex-Ẓāhiriyya Taṣawwuf collection (ms. 11353 now Maktabat al-Asad) cf. Riyāḍ Māliḥ's catalogue (3:73 §2111) and Kaḥḥāla, Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn (5:195).*

The author was also honored to meet the noble Ḥabīb and director of the historical Bā 'Alawī mosque in Singapore, Sayyid Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Sālim al-'Aṭṭās – Allāh save him and have mercy on his foreparents! – who graced me with his hospitality and gifts from the Sunni heritage, among them the following books:

1. *The large masterpiece by al-Ḥabīb 'Alawī ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Quṭb 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alawī al-Ḥaddad titled* ***Sharḥ Rātib al-Ḥaddād****, a 525-page lexical, juridical, and sufi commentary in twenty-seven chapters of the short supplication of Imām 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥaddād which is read in Yemen and through the Borneo peninsula. The introduction of al-Ḥabīb 'Alawī ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥaddād's to his 1216 (1801 CE) refutation of the Wahhābi sect titled* ***Miṣbāh al-Anām*** *wa-Jalā' al-Ẓalām fī Raddi Shubah al-Bid'ī al-Najdī al-Latī Aḍalla bihā al-'Awāmm ("The Light of Mankind in Refuting the Falsehoods of the Innovator from Najd by Which He Has Misguided the General Public") has been published in English translation by the writer of these lines joined with the recent epistle (translated in full) of al-Sayyid Yūsuf ibn Hāshim al-Rifā'ī titled* ***Naṣīḥa li-Ikhwāninā 'Ulamā' Najd*** *("Advice to our Brethren the Ulema of Najd").*

2. *Three most precious compilations on the merits of invoking blessings on the Paragon of creation, upon him blessings and peace:*

   Faḍl al-Ṣalāt 'alāl-Nabī ﷺ *by Qāḍī Ismā'īl al-Mālikī (d. 272);*
   Anwār al-Āthār *al-Mukhtaṣṣatu bi-Faḍā'il al-Ṣalāt 'alā al-Nabī al-Mukhtār* ﷺ *by Abū al-'Abbās al-Iqlīshī (d. 550); and*
   Al-Durr al-Manḍūd *fil-Ṣalāti wal-Salām 'alā Ṣāḥib al-Maqām al-Maḥmūd* ﷺ *by Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 973).*

3. ***Al-Riḥlatu al-Miḥḍāriyya*** *ilāl-Najafi wal-Kūfati wal-Bilād al-Karbalā'iyya by Sayyid Ja'far ibn 'Alawī ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Miḥḍār of Java. This 1972-1976CE travelogue is rich in instructive anecdotes on contemporary Muslim culture and Ahl al-Bayt history by*

a traditional educator of the first rank. Miḥḍār means "perpresent" after al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Miḥḍār' constant presence (ḥuḍūr) with the Prophet, upon him and his House blessings and peace.

4. *The precious epistle by Imām al-Suyūṭī – Allāh have mercy on him –* **al-Bāhir** *fī Ḥukm al-Nabiyyi ṢallAllāhu 'alayh wa-Ālih wa-Sallam bil-Bāṭini wal-Ẓāhir on the proofs that the Prophet ﷺ passed rulings not only on the basis of outward knowledge but also of internal knowledge, reuniting the criteria of al-Khiḍir with those of all the other Prophets.*

5. ***'Uqūd al-Almās*** *("The Diamond Necklaces"), a biography of the Quṭb al-Ḥabīb Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Abd Allāh al-'Aṭṭās by Shaykh 'Alawī ibn Ṭāhir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥaddād - Allāh be well-pleased with both of them! This 300-page book ends with an history of Islām in Java, Sumatra, and the Borneo peninsula dating the coming of the first 'Alawī masters to those parts as far back as the fifth century.*

6. ***Rashafāt Ahl al-Kamāl wa-Nasamāt Ahl al-Wiṣāl*** *("The Sips of the People of Perfection and the Breezes of the People of Connection"), a precious dīwān of spiritual poetry by Sayyid 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh BalFaqīh who says – Allāh be well-pleased with him:*

وليس ينجوِ العبد من كل ردَى * إلا إذا بالحق في الصدق اهتدى
فسوف يُعطى كل فوز وهُدَى * بالفضل في الحال وفي المآل
لكنّه ليس له ذريعَه * إلى هُدىً ورتبة رفيعَه
إلا اتِّباعُ الدِّين والشريعَه * وقصد وجه الله ذي الجلالِ

The servant will not be delivered from every lowly trait
except when he truthfully makes al-Ḥaqq his guidance.
Then he shall be granted every victory and right guidance
through munificence right here and in the hereafter.
But he has no avenue whatsoever available
to guidance and to a lofty rank
Except to follow the Religion and the Sacred Law
aiming at the countenance of Allāh the Most Gracious.

Among the thorny issues in Singapore is usury (ribā). It is an issue of the highest gravity. As Dr. Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Būṭī said – echoing the masses of the prominent Ulema – in his condemnations without appeal of al-Ṭanṭāwī's "American" fatwās legalizing usury, "Allāh Most High declared war against one thing in His Book and that is ribā." ﴾**O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allāh, and give up what remains from usury, if ye are (in truth) believers. And if ye do not, then be warned of war (against you) from Allāh and His messenger. And if ye repent, then ye have your principal (without interest). Wrong not, and ye shall not be wronged**﴿ *(2:278-279).*

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَذَرُوا۟ مَا بَقِىَ مِنَ ٱلرِّبَوٰٓا۟
إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧٨﴾ فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا۟ فَأْذَنُوا۟ بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ
ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ ۖ وَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَٰلِكُمْ لَا
تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٩﴾ ﴾ البقرة

Yet the Prophet, upon him peace, warned that it would become impossible for the scrupulous Believer to avoid it completely: "There shall come a time upon the people when they will take usury, those who do not take it will be affected by the dust of it." It was narrated from Abū Hurayra – Allāh be well-pleased with him – by al-Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, and Aḥmad.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ لَمْ يَأْكُلْهُ أَصَابَهُ مِنْ غُبَارِهِ رواه النَّسائي وأبو داود وابن ماجه وأحمد

Thus, it was left to the conscionable latter-day Muslims to keep the specter of ribā at bay as far as humanly possible and not throw up their arms in defeat even if the entire world revels in a ribā-based economy. Ḥudhayfa – Allāh be well-pleased with him – narrated that the Prophet – upon him peace – said: "Do not be conformers who say: 'If people do good we shall do good, and if they do wrong we shall do wrong.' Rather, gear yourselves to do good if people do good, and, if they do wrong, not to do wrong."[2]

عَنْ حُذَيْفَةَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا تَكُونُوا إِمَّعَةً تَقُولُونَ إِنْ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسُ أَحْسَنَّا وَإِنْ ظَلَمُوا ظَلَمْنَا وَلَكِنْ وَطِّنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنْ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسُ أَنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَإِنْ أَسَاءُوا فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا رواه الترمذي وحسّنه

[2] *Al-Tirmidhī narrated it and declared it ḥasan, while al-Bukhārī in al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr narrates it as, "Do not be conformers turning with every wind."*

Many Singaporean Muslims partake in transactions Islām sees as usurious (ribawī) such as interest-laden housing loans, leases, insurance (other than obligatory car insurance in some views), transactions in capital such as shares and stock market, interest banking… Any money accrued from the latter, for example, must be gotten rid of but can never be considered ṣadaqa nor used to pay government taxes nor anything else, contrary to the statement to that effect in The Muslim Reader magazine (Vol. 20 No. 3 page 8), because it is illicit property in the first place. If placed unsolicited into one's possession, one gets rid of it as fast as possible without the least expectation of reward. This ruling has often been clarified by our teachers in Damascus, Shaykh Adīb Kallās al-Ḥanafī and Dr. Wahba al-Zuḥaylī al-Shāfi'ī.

One solution is the promotion of takāful or cooperative insurance which provides permitted insurance. Another view is so-called Islamic banking. Solutions, whatever they are, are more urgent yet than the building of mosques and madrasahs. But unless Islamic financial institutions also make their products appealing and affordable instead of aiming to do "business as usual," those in need will continue to turn to usurious providers. **﴾And whosoever keeps his duty to Allāh, Allāh will appoint a way out for him, and will provide for him from a quarter whence he has no expectation. Whosoever puts his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him. Lo! Allāh brings**

His command to pass. Allāh has set a measure for all things﴾ *(65:2-3).*

﴿ وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا
يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُۥٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بَٰلِغُ
أَمْرِهِۦ ۚ قَدْ جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾ ﴾ الطلاق

Another thorny issue in Singapore is the tudung, the Malay word for the head, neck, and throat veil of the Muslima known in Arabic as the ḥijāb. It has been the wont of the enemies of good since the beginning to persuade the paragons of creation – human beings since our first father and mother – to doff the garments of chastity, decency, modesty, and nobility so as to expose them and bring them nearer to the animal. ﴿**Children of Ādam! Let not Satan seduce you as he caused your (first) parents to go forth from the Garden and tore off from them their robe (of innocence) that he might manifest their shame to them. Lo! he sees you, he and his tribe, from whence you see him not. Lo! We have made the devils protecting friends for those who believe not**﴾ *(7:27).*

﴿ يَٰبَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ كَمَآ أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم
مِّنَ ٱلْجَنَّةِ يَنزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْءَٰتِهِمَآ ۗ إِنَّهُۥ

يَرَىٰكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُۥ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا ٱلشَّيَٰطِينَ
أَوْلِيَآءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ ﴾ الأعراف

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Tudung in Islām in not so much a symbol of religion as it is one of civilization and culture of the highest order. It is the remnant of the standard of feminine privacy and dignity known to all the other civilizations and cultures on earth. It is ironic that it should be kept out of the educational public space. It is an endangered species as the human race's garment of modesty par excellence. Forbidding it in the name of secularism only hastens the march of materialism and impoverishes the human heritage. It is also a violation of protocol injuring an entire community which considers its women princesses and queens. Worse, it transforms a native flower into an extremized hybrid – an import – unable to integrate into the larger social mosaic but instead absorbed with holier-than-thou purism and inviting polemics. A perfect recipe for division and prejudice! With the help of Allāh wisdom shall prevail. The authorities will perceive that if hearts are sincere in their adherence to Religion – not religious politics – and Muslimah citizens are allowed full expression of their identity and self-esteem in the public space, the only way society will go by permitting tudung in public schools is up.

A foremost government official said, "The good progress of the Muslim community is the result of hard work, determination, and the community working as one with other Singaporeans." However, the Muslims are more than just dependable. They are the conscience of the world. They serve a higher ideal than work ethics and state-building even if these are natural side-results of their character. It is therefore the task of their conscionable representatives everywhere to set the tone and high moral standards for the societies and the very institutions and governments that manage them. This can only be achieved by clinging to the saving path and persevering in seeking Divine good-pleasure according to the rule that ﴾**Allāh changes not the condition of a folk until they first change that which is in themselves**﴿ *(13:11).*

﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ﴾ الرعد

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وصلى الله على سيدنا
محمد وآله وصحبه
أجمعين والحمد
لله رب
العالمين


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